

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

SHIFTING GEARS PROJECT
BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY

INFORMANT: JEANETTE BRUNETTE
CONDUCTED BY: PETER MOREAU
DATE: 1988

M = PETER MOREAU
B = JEANETTE BRUNETTE

SG-BV-T113B

[there is a whooshing noise throughout the entire tape, and Mrs. Brunette seems to be at some distance from the recorder, making it often very difficult or impossible to understand her]

M: Eh uh this is an interview with Mrs. Jeanette Brunette, uh concerning the village of Albion. The first question I have is eh how long have you lived in, in Albion?

B: Oh at least sixteen years. W-wait a minute, that's seventy-one, and I was here at [unclear] sixteen years.

M: And you came here from Canada?

B: From Canada. Yes.

M: And where, where in Canada?

B: Uh, Quebec.

M: Quebec Province?

B: Yeah [unclear].

M: Do, do, do you know which uh parish?

B: Ste. Gregoire.

M: Ste. Gregoire. (B: Yeah) Where is, where is that?

B: That's way up in Canada [unclear]. (M: Okay) [laughs] It's in Canada.

M: Do you s-, still have relatives there?

B: No.

M: No. The whole family, whole family came.

B: Oh yes the whole family came here. My mother's uh got nieces over there but uh, that's it. But the whole family is here in America.

M: Okay, and why did they, why did they leave Canada and come here?

B: Well my father was here. He found some work here, and he sent for my mother and the kids, and we all came by train.

M: What, what had he been doing in Canada?

B: Uh, uh, he was uh, he was in a cotton mill.

M: In a cotton mill in Canada. Oh

B: Yeah.

M: I didn't even know they had many cotton mills there.

B: Yes, they had.

M: Huh. It was better, better work here or better pay or was (- -)

B: Oh, I, I guess so.

M: Yeah. And did you ever wo-, did you ever work in the mill?

B: Oh my God I started I was fifteen.

M: You started at fifteen?

B: That's right. After my graduation.

M: And what uh, what (- -)

B: [unclear]

M: And what uh, what type of work did you do?

B: I winded [unclear].

M: And what, what is that, just (- -)

B: Just cotton. A winding machine. You know a big machine. I had to control the machine.

M: Do you remember what your pay was when you started?

B: Oh I don't, maybe twelve dollars a, a week. [interviewer chuckles] Then I used to take it home to my husband.

M: Did he work in the mill, too?

B: No, not long. He didn't like it. (M: Yeah) He worked on something else.

M: What, could you describe the conditions in the mill. What was it like, what was it like working in the, in the mill there?

B: Well we'd start, we'd start at six in the morning, six at night. We had to come in for dinner, you know [unclear] my parents.

M: You'd come back? [unclear]

B: We'd come back here then we'd go back to work until six. And sometimes we'd have to work maybe four hours on Saturdays. And then they changed like for three shifts. (M: Yeah) Then that was a little different because you know the years went by. So I was on the third shift working eight hours and on a Saturday. And the people [unclear], then they had the union.

M: Any, any idea when the union started?

B: Oh gee, I don't know. I had a writeup, one time my brother [unclear] president of the union for a while. (M: Oh) I couldn't say for sure.

M: How, did they ever have any strikes? With the union.

B: Maybe once. May-, I think once over here. (M: Yeah, how) But it was settled fast.

M: How, oh, it wasn't long? (B: No, no) They, did workers in the, the, the bosses and the management usually get along?

B: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

M: Okay uhh, one thing in particular I wanted to ask you about. In this interview was the, was the boardinghouse, which is at the, the corner of uh Main Street and School Street. And I know you, you worked there and you're very familiar with it. Uh, could you describe what that, what that was like?

B: Well, actually if [unclear], you could get sandwiches there [unclear], and I used to help her make sandwiches; and, but all the boarders had one room: a bed, a bureau and a chair. No cooking in there at all. She had a big dining room. They all had to eat there. And she was running that for the company you know.

M: Oh the company. She was running it for the company. (B: For the company) Did now, d-di-, did the people who stay there pay her or did the company pay her? How did that (- -)

B: Uh they used to take it off their pay to make sure she was paid, because some of the guys wouldn't stay too long you know what I mean. (M: Oh I see) Just enough money to pay [unclear].

M: So in other words the company would take it off the pay of these people who were staying there, (B: Yeah) and then they would give her the money.

B: Yeah, and then she, this you can also read about. And then she tells you the whole story.

M: Okay and this is uh (- -)

B: That's her, Blanche.

M: Blanche McCoy.

B: Yes. So any time you want an interview with her, I mean I talk to her. (M: Okay) And I would, I could go with you to show where she's at.

M: She's, where does she live now? (B: She) I know she doesn't live here anymore but (- -)

B: In a highrise in Manville.

M: In Manville.

B: Manville. That's [unclear].

M: On the, on the Cumberland side. (B: Yes, yes) Oh.

B: And (M: Okay) I've known her for years. I used to go there, I was in school. So I've known her at least for f-, at least fifty-five years.

M: How is it that you got started uh working [both talk] there and then knowing her?

B: Well, she, they, they had a couple of roomers there, boarders. And there was a little bitty person. Every time I go to the store I used to go my sister who lived by [unclear]. And she'd wave at us that little bitty person. She was French. So she said, "Why don't you come up and see me?" you know. So we'd go up and that's how we started, young, and we kept going there.

She'd send us to the store you know to buy [unclear] you know for work [unclear] person. And Blanche at the same time, her, she was cooking there, downstairs on the sec-, first floor. In the big dining room. And she would, she's, she's [unclear].

M: Now did, did the people who lived there have to, have to eat there at the boardinghouse, or did they (- -)

B: Yeah, there was no restaurant around, because they were paying their board, see? (M: Yeah) [unclear] a week. (M: Yeah) And then uh, send all their clothes to the, the washer. There's a man that used to come and take a big bag of dirty clothes up there. We used to sort them out. The guys used to take their clothes in their room. She used to make the lunches for them to go to work in the mill. We used to help her.

M: So she did all their meals. (B: Oh yeah!) She made their breakfasts,

B: Oh, everything!

M: She gave them their lunch to go and then (- -)

B: [unclear] their lunch, everything. (M: Oh wow) She'd get up at one o'clock in the morning.

M: To, to start cooking you mean?

B: Cooking, and then she started the restaurant downstairs. [interviewer chuckles] And she had a canteen besides.

M: [chuckling] When did she, when did she sleep?

B: [unclear]. That's right, she misses the place. She misses the place you know.

M: Yeah I remember it when it was open as a, you know, little restaurant.

B: Yeah. Did you ever go?

M: Yeah, years ag-, year, I'm trying to remember when it closed, about eh, (B: Well) ten, ten, twelve years ago.

B: [several sentences unclear]

M: Oh yeah. Yeah. Do you know when, I don't know, maybe it says it in here, do know when she uh, when she opened the (- -)

B: The restaurant you mean?

M: Well, and the boardinghouse.

B: Oh the boardinghouse, ay, I think it's about twenty, it says there in the story. Uh you can, I, I can let you have it, it's hers. And you can read about it, and (M: Okay) you'll know more about the boardinghouse from her.

M: Okay, well what I'll probably do is zerox it and give it back to you. (B: Sure) I think that's the best, maybe that's the best thing to do.

B: Because this one he says, "I've got my own, boy, it must be upstairs." So I tell him I says, "Let me have yours. And then when he comes in I'll show it to him." And she still has all the keys. (B: Yeah) [unclear] the dining room. (M: Yeah) And all the keys were [unclear]. And she had a big cowbell. She used to ring the bell, the guys would come down you know. And then when they'd get through, they'd go back in their rooms and [unclear] or sit up in the back. (M: Yeah) And I'd wash the dishes with her. [unclear] That was nice.

M: It must have been uhh (- -) And she did all the cooking?

B: She did all the cooking.

M: For all those people.

B: For all those people. Oh yes.

M: Was it, was the place usually uh filled with, [clears throat] with boarders?

B: She had thirty-two at once there. The most she ever had was thirty-two boarders. She will say it there, (M: Yeah) in her story.

M: Was it usually, were there usually that many or were there times when there was not too many people there?

B: Well at the end she didn't have too many, but she knew she was going to [unclear].

M: Well that was after the, after the mill was closed. I mean (B: Yeah) when, when the mill was open.

B: Oh yeah, she had them all. She had thirty-two boarders. (M: Is that right?) Yeah. And they'd leave you know. And others would come back. Sometime they'd stay a few weeks, and sometime late. And some of them died over there. From the First World War. (M: Hm) [pause: 5 sec.]

M: Um, wh-, wha-, what kind of person would, would live there? I know like most of the w-, most of the people who worked in the mill lived in the village; had their own houses or apartments in the village. (B: Yeah) But what kind of person would live in the boardinghouse? Was it a different (- -)

B: Well it was outsiders. Most of them were outsiders. There was a few from Albion that was single guys, you know. (M: Yeah) From the First World War. They'd take a new [unclear], they'd stay there. Some of them died there. Some of them, a lot of them were, most of them were outsiders. But not too many from the village because they all had really good family here in the small village.

M: I as-, I assume when the, when the place opened they must have still had outhouses and (- -)

B: Well, no she didn't, she was telling me, I says, "You know, when my cousin bought the," we always lived here, I said, "We had outhouses in the back." (M: Yeah) We had to share with two, the, this house, the little one and the brick house, down the other end there. She says, "No, we always had a bathroom," she says, "when I came here." (M: Oh yeah) Yeah. That's what she [both talk, Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: She must have had one of the first ones then.

B: Well yeah I should say, because [unclear]. Even when I got married, across the street you can dig [unclear], I mean uh the bathroom in the house. (M: Is that right?) When I, I got married, it'll be forty-nine years, that's a big time, forty-nine years (- -)

M: Yeah, that's nineteen, 1939?

B: Yeah. In November. It'll be forty-nine years. (M: Wow) See, now, I can go on, I'll be my fifty years (M: That's right) [unclear] a man. [interviewer chuckles] Because I used to live downstairs. And we had uh, a thing outside. And then she had her (- -)

M: When you got married?

B: Yes. (M: That you'll have) Yes.

M: So wh-, wha-, when, when, any idea when they put, (B: Ahh) put it (- -)

B: Let's see. Maybe a year and a half after I was married.

M: So somewheres around 1940, (B: Forty, yeah) nineteen, 1941?

B: Forty. Let's see I was, I [unclear] almost two years before I was [unclear]. My, my [unclear] were living with me. I was uh, maybe a year after I was married, I figure. I was working in the mill. My mo-, my in-laws were with me. [unclear]. (M: Now, what [clears throat]) Then I moved here with my parents anyway. And she sold the house some other family.

M: How many, how many years did you work in the mill?

B: Oh my God. See that thing. Close to thirty years.

M: Now like, you were working there when you had your children?

B: Oh yes!

M: So how did they, how did the mill, I mean obviously you had to take time off when you, did they give you a certain amount of time off when you w- (- -)

B: Oh they don't give you no time off. You used to take time off but you wasn't paid for that. I, I, (- -)

M: When you had your children.

B: Yes. And then my mother used to take care of my kids when I'd go back to work.

M: You went right back to work after you (- -)

B: Oh yes. (M: Oh, that was a) [unclear] within a month I was back to work.

M: And there was no, there was no problem getting your job back or anything.

B: No, but sometime I had to go on the third shift. They were on the (M: Oh) three shifts there you know. There are changes like time. Time was changing. I had to go on the second shift or third shift.

M: So you wouldn't necessarily get the same uh (- -)

B: No, I'd get the same kind of work though.

M: Same kind of work, (B: Yes) but not necessarily at the same time.

B: But I'd have to change shifts, because I'd lose my seniority.

M: Yeah. Oh you lose your seniority whenever eh, (B: Oh yeah) [unclear] time.

B: You know I had the kids, hey, it wasn't their fault you know.

M: You [unclear], yeah that's true, but even though you, well that wouldn't happen today, [both talk; interviewer unclear]

B: Well today is altogether different. (M: Yeah) Even want to give the husband uh time off (M: Yeah) you know? (M: Yeah) [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: They didn't do anything like that.

B: Oh! I should say not.

M: [chuckles] Okay. Uh, [pause: 5 sec.] let's see, whe-, when, when Blanche was operating the boardinghouse, she gave the boarding house, she gave all the people their meals.

B: All the food, and everything!

M: Plus, plus she had a restaurant open to the public.

B: After. (M: Oh after) But quite a few years after. But she had the canteen for the mill.
(M: Yeah) She was running both. She had all the boarders and the canteen.

M: And the canteen for the mill is, is what?

B: She used to cook for them, make sandwiches. I used to help her, (M: Yeah) whenever I was able to go to help her. And then she had somebody to take uh all the stuff down the mill. And we go downstairs and we used to go you know [unclear]. Sandwiches, hot dogs, pastry, you name it. She used to make all those little pie. Vegetable pie one day, uh salmon pie, beef pies, tuna fish pie. She had a different little pies to sell every day. (M: Yeah) She used to make that. She used to make her doughnuts. (M: Oh) Everything. Big pies there you know apple pie, coconut custard, everything. They used to, we used to sell everything. I used to say, "Hey, Blanche, get to the front there, [unclear], come on, get out there, close the place." She said, "Aww." (M: Yeah)

M: And then af-, after that she (- -)

B: Af-, after the canteen. Now, she was losing quite a bit of orders. She figured out open a restaurant. She still had the canteen when she opened up the restaurant. (M: Oh) And then when the mill closed, well, there was no more canteen. (M: Right) Right? So she only kept the restaurant. And she had a few guys s-, uh s-, uh living upstairs, but they'd eat in the restaurant. She (M: Yeah) wouldn't use the dining room anymore.

M: Oh she didn't, after the mill closed?

B: After the mill closed. (M: Oh, okay; but they w-) She had very few. You know until she opened the restaurant. When she opened the restaurant all the guys used to come and eat downstairs. (M: Yeah) They used to [unclear] you know. Sometimes she'd have seven or eight, used to have just them. Used to pay just a little. And then they'd pay for the food outside.

M: Now did she, when she had the restaurant, did she still have a, was it still open for, for dinner? I, I remember as being like a breakfast and (B: Oh well this) lunch place.

B: Well this was open at six o'clock in the morning, (M: Yeah, I remember that) until six o'clock at night.

M: Oh, open until six at night, okay.

B: Oh yes. (M: Okay) We used to be there, we used to work like the dickens for her.

Fridays and Thursdays she used to have pot roast. That was a big [unclear]. (M: Oh) At noontime she didn't have nothing left. (M: Oh-oh) I, sometime she says to me, she says, "I miss that, because she was used to it, you know, getting up early and going [unclear] you know. And then you can have this and you see what she has to say. It's a good story. (M: Yeah) Whatever she's got, she earned the hard way.

M: I guess so. She must have really worked hard.

B: No lineoleum there in the dining room. It was wood.

M: The old, the original wood floor. (B: Oh y-, yeh)

B: We used, she used to wash that, used to smell so nice. (M: Oh yeah) We used to put baking and her husband come in and eat. She had the state troopers coming in, she had the gang from the office in the Berkshire. When the mill was running they had [unclear], yeah. And we s-, we reset the table. She'd cook again. I says, "If you had all these [unclear]." [both laugh]

M: Uhh, let's see, what, what did they use for heat? How did they heat the building?

B: Oh she had oil. And at fir-, oh you mean to heat up the house?

M: Yeah, the boardinghouse.

B: All right. At first she used to have coal. When she first moved there. She used to heat the whole, the whole place.

M: How did she, was there, (B: Oh yeah, he had) something going around all, all the way [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear] around all the rooms?

B: Yeah the old-fashioned way, you know. You know those old-fashioned things for the heating system? They stand up. I don't know how you call them.

M: It's like a stove or (- -)

B: It's not a stove. It's just like they sell there for like an ornament now. It's, it was that high.

M: Oh. From the floor? Like about three (B: Yeah) feet high? (B: Yeah) Two, three feet high?

B: Yeah. It had little legs. (M: Yeah) And it had a pipe going through this. It used to heat up the place [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: And it used to, but the pipes used to go up through all the rooms?

B: I guess, because she used to heat up the, all these floors.

M: Okay, and it was coal?

B: First and second oh yeah.

M: And where would she get the coal from? And how would, how would people get coal? I mean there's no coal around here.

B: No, but I guess the company u-, they used to, [unclear] it together, they used to furnish the coal for her. (M: Oh I see) She'd say that on that, too. (M: Huh) And then she had the furnace [unclear] for oil, you know? [both talk: Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: Yeah, she changed it to oil.

B: Yeah. And years it was oil.

M: And what about, y-, y-, said the people had one room. What did, what did they use for like, like bathroom facilities?

B: [unclear] first floor, she had one john with a shower. And this, this kind of big, you know. Because she had little sinks for the guys to wash up. (M: Hm) It was like a, I think they had four little sinks, and they had, and she had a bigger sink there that [unclear]. And upstairs on the second floor she had one john and a small sink. That was it. When she opened up the restaurant she had one john downstairs [unclear]. (M: Yeah) Only one john. (M: Okay; so then) You can imagine everybody was [unclear].

M: Yeah, it must have been [Mrs. Brunette laughs] uh crowded at times. You must have to wait in line sometimes.

B: Take a number!

M: That's right. (B: Ohh!) Especially if people are getting ready to go to work, (B: Well yes, because) they probably want to use it at the same time. She had to get up early, and she had to get up early to do everything. (M: Yeah) She used to have potatoes in the morning, sausage and eggs, for the guys. You know. She used to, she had big pots of coffee on each [unclear], you know. The whole table.

M: Now when, when she started this, this is like in the nineteen, she probably started like in nineteen twenties or something (B: Yes, [unclear]) when she opened it? Where would she get the li-, ee-, the food from? The food that she cooked.

B: Well, she had a car.

M: Oh, she had a car.

B: Yeah. (M: Oh) She'd go out and buy. And she had some delivered. She'd have a few

guys deliver the meat. And we had a store, (M: Yeah) where, I'll tell you now, where the laundromat is (M: Yeah) and the Blue Fountain? (M: Yeah) There used to be a, a store, meat and [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: Pri-, private store. (M: Yeah) It wasn't owned by the company.

B: No, no. That was private. She used to buy from them, from them. And whenever she had a chance to go to Hampton she used to go buy a lot of stuff. (M: Um hm)

M: Now what about for you, for like when you first came here, what, how would it, like for shopping. For clothes or something like that.

B: Well there, oh my God, (M: Where would you) there's a man, there's a man from Woonsocket, he used to walk from Manville with a big suitcase.

M: He'd walk?

B: Yes! (M: Wow) Well there weren't many cars you know. (M: Yeah) It was all dirt. (M: Yeah) You know over here. I went over [unclear].

M: When was, you have any idea when that (- -)

B: Oh God, [unclear].

M: They put the, did they m-, uh put the pavement and the sidewalks in at the same time?

B: Uh, no. [unclear] they did the street first. And then they put the sidewalks. That's a long time ago. Maybe it's [unclear], (M: Yeah) I'm not sure. But I remember [unclear].

M: It was after you, after you came though.

B: Oh yes, oh yes. It's a long time.

M: It must be a big, a big change.

B: Oh well yeah.

M: But somebody, a s-, a person came from Manville walking with a suitcase to (B: Yeah, yeah) sell clothes?

B: He wa-, he was [unclear], he was an old man. And he'd go around, and he'd stop in the houses, and my mother'd buy a couple of pieces. Well you see, there was not much money. (M: Yeah) Right? My mother was working and my father was working. She had seven kids. And she'd buy, at that time, hey, just maybe fifty cents a week. And then he finally go himself an old jalopy, that man. And he had more clothes and [unclear]. See we had to get by with very little. (M: Yeah) It's not like today. Today the kids they you know (- -) [phone rings] Sorry.

M: [chuckles] No, no, I can (- -)

[tape stops momentarily]

M: Okay, you, you mentioned to me earlier about the, the V that was put in uh as a memorial to World War II. (B: World War II) And that was uh, that was put in what, after the, right after the war, is it (- -)

B: Well, see my brother was, the others were still fighting over there.

M: They put it in while the War was still going on?

B: Yes. (M: Oh) And you know, in them days, they used to put a little flag in the do-, in the window, or in the door. And it used to show if you had someone [unclear] in the service. (M: I see) And my mother had the most in the village.

M: She had all five, five sons.

B: And my sister's husband was a prisoner of war. (M: Oh really?) Yes. He was never brought back. My husband was the last one to go [unclear]. And my mother had the most kids in the service. She had five sons [unclear]. (M: Wow) And she was fortunate, they all came back. (M: Hm) You know.

M: Yes, I guess so! And that w-, what was the V made out of? Just wood?

B: That was just wood. And it was painted with red and blue you can (M: Oh I see) see there. (M: Yeah) And they had all the names. Some of the nurses was over there you know. Women. (M: Yeah) That served.

M: Anybody in the village who was serving?

B: Yeah. Anybody that was in the service, all their name was there. And you have them in my paper there I'll show (M: Yeah) you. (M: Yeah) All the names are there. And whoever was at uh the ceremonies, celebration or whatever. And they gave her flowers and all that. And they were wondering where the other [unclear] were, so [unclear] mother she got two at V Day, they went over there. And uh [unclear]. (M: And then) [unclear].

M: Plus the V is not there anymore so (- -)

B: [unclear] the base. Now I don't want to [unclear] the base is still there. (M: Yeah) But they never replaced the V when it broke.

M: It broke.

B: Well yes. [unclear] (M: Yeah; yeah; right) It's not like a monument. You know. (M:

Yeah) So they gave that uh the company. And all the names of the guys are there. And uh that [unclear] broken of course when I [unclear].

M: Is there any uh, I wonder if anybo-, does anybody still have a list of all the names? I think they should probably (- -)

B: Oh I guess a lot of people has it, have [unclear]. I know I got mine. I know somebody else must. I don't know who, but they must have had other mothers had kids in the service.

M: I'm sure, yeah. I wonder if somebody has a list of all the names though.

B: I don't know. [unclear] of mine.

M: Any idea when that, when it broke? Because I don't remember it at all.

B: [unclear].

M: It must be, it must be a while ago. (B: Yeah)

B: And some of the names are in church. Back of the church. Not all of these, but the ones that (M: Yeah) [unclear] the parish.

M: Okay, I w-, I, is, is this one of the houses that used to be (- -)

B: That's right.

M: It is. I don't know if you know, how much you know about the history. Any idea when this house, I, this (B: Yes) house was, was down by, B: The railroad tracks by the uh, by the mill, down by th, down by the railroad tracks, and it was moved. (B: Yeah, it's moved) Okay, any idea when it was moved?

B: I, eh, it was here when we came.

M: Oh, so it was quite a (- -)

B: Yes.

M: I wonder how they moved it.

B: I don't know [unclear].

M: They didn't have any machines or anything.

B: [unclear] I wouldn't know. This my brother could find out [unclear]. (M: Yeah) [unclear]. But I know when we came here the house was here. (M: The house was already here) And the little house there was here, too.

M: The one next door to you.

B: Next, not to me, but (M: Yeah) [unclear]. (M: Right) You know it's just like a little doll house. (M: Oh is that right?) Yeah. [unclear]. (M: Oh yeah, yeah; so) And this, this wa-, had, was a whole wall, here. (M: Oh) My son took that down. (M: Yeah) And that was like a two tenement place. (M: Yeah) Yeah, of course they didn't have that. This was stairs to go up in the attic. (M: Yeah) This, I took that down to make a closet. We didn't have no closet. Just like Blanche. There wasn't a closet in the whole boardinghouse.

M: Oh yeah the people keep their, their clothes in (- -)

B: Well, you know she had nails on the wall. (M: Yeah) Used to hang their clothes with (M: Oh) hangers. (M: Oh) And there was just one bed, a chair and a bureau like this. Not one clo-, not even for herself.

M: Well, that was all hers. I mean th-, she owned the beds and the, and the uh (- -)

B: Oh, that was there when she went in. (M: Yeah) That was there when she went in fifty, maybe at least fifty years ago. You can read about (M: Yeah) that, too. Not one closet. Imagine. [interviewer chuckles] My mother had a little closet right here. (M: Yeah) And then my son took that down. And he built two of these, one in my bedroom and one right here. And then my father had an [unclear] in to do the the porch. Well I got mad that the porch was here. But before that [unclear] with a window here. There was two windows here and two over there. There was a wall. Then my father opened this up so you could use the whole place with his [unclear]. (M: Yeah) And we had, in here, like right about here there was a sink, and they had a lot of nails to put your clothes on. You know it, when you start a [unclear].

M: I guess, yeah. That's quite a change. Ah, [both talk: Mrs. Brunette unclear] what, when, when you were young what did, what did people do to, to, to pass the time? (B: Oh wow) So it'll say, you know when they weren't working.

B: Well we had to go to school, right? (M: Yeah) We had to go to catechism. We had to go to church Sunday afternoon. We had to go to chu-, we used to walk around, we had a some kind of a small playground. Not a playground. The school had a 4-H Club. We each had a little garden. (M: Oh, is that right? where?) Oh yeah we belonged to (M: Where?) [unclear].

M: Where were the gardens?

B: Well you know where that vacant lot is on School Street?

M: Where the school used to be?

B: Yeah. (M: Yeah) You know. All right. (M: Yeah) Well that was only for the houses. We had the little houses. (M: Yeah) There was a cornfield here in the back of the house.

M: Where Berkshire Drive is you mean?

B: Yeah, oh yeah. That was one cornfield.

M: And that's where your, your gardens were?

B: Yeah. For the kids in school. (M: Oh) We had to be in the 4-H Club.

M: Everybody had to be in?

B: Yeah. Well, we had to. Yeah.

M: And what did, what did you grow? Vegetables and things or that [unclear].

B: Yeah. Spinach, you know that, you know.

M: And when, when did you work in the garden?

B: Well we're in school. We had so (M: Oh) much time. (M: Oh) We had recess and so much time you had to do your garden to make sure you keep it, you know [unclear].

M: This was with the public school, right?

B: Yeah. [unclear].

M: Oh, I see. So you went to the public school?

B: Oh yeah, we all did.

M: Was there like a, was there a difference? Was one school supposed to be better than the other school, or was it (- -)

B: Well to me, no. To me, no. (M: I, I don't know, I just wanted) Because we had to go to catechism. I went to catechism until I was sixteen years old. (M: Yeah) Because we couldn't go to the Catholic school. We had to pay, not much, but my mother couldn't afford with seven kids. (M: Yeah) But she promised that she'd send us to catechism. So we all did. And of course when I came from Canada I couldn't speak a word of English.

M: So how did you get by in the school?

B: Well! [laughs] You know, table is spelled the same as in French. (M: Yeah) Well my alphabet I used to say in French. And you know uh, I, I didn't know how but I had to learn. Because, because I graduated, I was fifteen. I was a little uh, (M: Little older) I had to learn.

M: What grade, what grade did the school (- -)

B: Eight. (M: Eighth grade?) Eighth grade. The others [unclear]. I had a sister that went to St. [unclear] for a while but not long. And uh the teacher would say to me, "[unclear]." She knew that I didn't say the word right. Because I used to spell a different way. (M: Yeah) And she said, "When you going to learn?" And one day I said something that wasn't right because the girl in back of me used to, you know there was a hand that you write with, and it was an old-fashioned pen you used [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear]

M: Was it Halterman?

B: Yeah. Used an inkwell.

M: Yeah. Dip it in.

B: Yeah. So when she poked me in the back you know. And I didn't know the girl too well. [unclear]. So she wrote me a note. She says, "[unclear]" written in French, "I want to see you after class." I could read French. Oh I said, I wish she wouldn't do to me. Oh I was so afraid! So she told me, she say, "[unclear]." "Well, yes," but I said, "she stuck me in my back with, with a pen." She says, "I'll talk to her." "Because next time, " she says, "you do that I'll wash your mouth." You know the soap that you wash your hair with. (M: Yeah, oh) Liquid stuff. Ohh-ho!

M: I guess they could do that in those days. [clears throat]

B: Over there I was very quiet.

M: Had you gone to school in Canada before? You said you knew how to (- -)

B: I just started. [unclear].

M: Because you knew how to, so how did you know how to read French?

B: Oh I could read French. (M: Yeah) Oh yeah. I still read French. [unclear] I couldn't forget that. (M: Yeah) Oh no. And I taught my kids French. So (- -)

M: So all of your, all of your kids speak French?

B: Oh yeah. The oldest one now he's in uh Rochester, New York, you know. So it's too bad they, I, the g-, my little grandchildren used to speak a little bit, but now they don't. But my youngest speaks French, because I, especially [unclear], (M: Yeah) and I get uh [unclear], French it goes faster, see? (M: Yeah) And [unclear].

M: You think it, like with your, your grandchildren and all that's being lost, the language?

B: Yes. Yeah. Because the youngest one, sh-she understands but she says, "You know," Meme she says, "you talk a little too fast." She says, "You talk fast." She says, "I don't understand a few words." "Oh," I said, "that's all right." [unclear].

M: Like when you were, when you were young and kids were hanging around together, did you speak in French or in English?

B: Oh here? (M: Yeah) In the village? (M: Yeah) Oh everybody was talking French. Most of them were, all of us were mostly French people.

M: Even, even the kids in the public school?

B: Yes. Yeah.

M: You would talk, like if you went to recess or something, you would talk, (B: Oh yes) you would talk (- -)

B: I would talk French. But we were told uh, I had to learn English. (M: Yeah) You know, we got the English. We had to learn that. My mother went to night school to learn English. (M: Oh, is that right?) Oh yes. Three nights a week I used to take her over [unclear].

M: Now why did she need to learn English?

B: Well, to, to better herself. (M: Oh I see) You know, when you meet somebody that don't [unclear]. (M: Yeah) She went, my father wouldn't, said, "I'm too old."

M: Why doesn't, I know there's some people in the village here who don't (B: Yes) s-, don't, don't speak English, or don't speak English very well, (B: That's right) even, even today.

B: But, see my mother could get by everywhere, because I've got letters from her, she used to write to me when she was in the nursing home. It's half French and half English. (M: Oh) But she always kept it up. Oh yeah, she went to school. I got to give her credit. (M: Yeah) She went to school. She didn't alwa-, we didn't always [unclear].

M: She was, she was an adult then when she went to school.

B: Oh yes, she used to go at night.

M: And where, here?

B: Yes. In that public school that's gone today.

M: Did they have, they had classes [both talk] at night for adults.

B: They had classes for the French people that wanted to learn English. (M: Ah) Oh yes, my mother went, and quite a few went. (M: Huh) I went.

M: Yeah, I know there was somebody, I know Mrs., Mrs, Fournier next door learned, learned English, too, because she (- -)

B: Yeah. [unclear].

M: On her own, huh. That's, that's good.

B: She's doing good though for her age, huh?

M: She's, yeah she does.

B: Eighty-four?

M: Eighty-three I think she is, (B: Eighty-three) yeah, yeah. She has a, she has a good memory.

B: Yes, that's, that's her that was here. She was [unclear].

M: Ohoh. She has a, she has a very good memory. She knew all the dates she said.

B: Oh yeah. She used to live on [unclear] the laundromat [unclear].

M: Yeah, yeah. She told me that. Yeah I talked to her last week or the week before, yeah. [pause: 3 sec.] Okay. Uhhh, let's see what else I was going to ask you. [pause: 5 sec.] What, what do you think the biggest change in the village has been? Since you, since you've been here. [pause: 5 sec.] That's a tough, tough question. I'm sure there's been a lot of changes, but (- -)

B: An awful lot. As far as the food, the prices. You know as far as the prices. And today we, we used to mind our parents more than what the kids are doing today. That's another thing, you know. And today (- -)

M: Why do y-, why do you think that is?

B: Well we used to mind here, I know that. We had to mind. We had to do our chores in the house.

M: What would happen if you didn't?

B: Well, hey! We had to, we could come, our parents were working for six hou-, uh twelve, wait a minute now, sixty-six.

M: Yeah. Twelve hours.

B: Twelve hours. So we had to help one another. My mother always said, "You've got to help one another. You, the boys especially, you had to go downstairs. They show, he gave us a little closet right here, right near the chimney. And he used to fill that up with wood, we used to use wood then.

M: So you had like a wood stove to, (B: Yes) to heat the house. Yeah, yeah.

B: We had a wood stove. Yeah. And then I had, [unclear] do the beds with my sister. Sometimes you wouldn't mind me, sometime I'd be [unclear]. That's how I was older. (M: Yeah) [laughs] And then she'd tell my mother. We all had our work to do. We all had to do our homework. "You can play after your homework is done." She wanted to make sure we did our [unclear]. (M: Yeah) But today they use [unclear].

M: Why, why do you think it's different? Today?

B: It is different!

M: But why?

B: Well see the laws are different. (M: That, that's true) Right? Now at eighteen you can do what you want. (M: Yeah) You can take off. According to what you hear and read. You can divorce your parents. Ehh, they say eh (- -) (M: Pretty much, yeah) All right, did you ever hear that, maybe with the kids in school?

M: Not, not, not years ago, I'm sure you couldn't do that.

B: Y-, oh y-, no, no.

M: When you, whe-, y-you started working at fifteen. (B: Fifteen, yes) Did you, did you give the money to your family?

B: Oh yes. Until, until I got married.

M: Until you got married you stayed at home and, and gave (- -)

B: Yeah, [unclear]. He g-, my father used to give me fifty cents a week. Fifty cents a week. That's big bucks you know. [both chuckle] You try and give fifty cents to a kid today, (M: Oh they) they wouldn't even go to the store for you. (M: Probably not) Noo. So fifty cents and they had to get it for you.

M: Well of course, fifty cents probably bought a lot more in those days than it would today.

B: Yeah! They used to go to the show, Manville, I had to bring eh a couple with me that my brother w-, especially my sister. We used to walk to Manville. [both talk; Mrs. Brunette unclear] (M: You used to walk to Manville to) The theater. Then we had a small theater, ten cents (M: Yeah) to go in. By the time we reached down there half of the picture was gone. I used to get [unclear]. (M: Oh)

M: But you used to walk, you used to walk together.

B: We used to walk together. (M: Yeah)

M: Seems like there's a lot of, a lot of people still walking.

B: Oh yes. I love it. Now since I have this there, well in the heat I don't go out (M: Oh, that's) much you know. But then when it gets a little cooler out here, [unclear] the lady next door. I used to go with her. Go around the [unclear]. Sometime we'd stop. I'd be short of breath. But that's what I miss of course. (M: Yeah) I used to walk. I used to walk and walk. I used to go right near the stone bridge you know Pat's?

M: Yeah. [both talk; interviewer unclear]

B: I used to, yeah, oh, Pat's yeah, and then go through Audubon, come back. (M: [unclear]) And I had to quit it because on account of my health.

M: Oh you worked at A.T. Cross then.

B: Yes. Well that's [unclear] at A.T. Cross. I used to work at Blanche's before, then I went to A.T. Cross for seven and a half. Then I had to quit because [unclear]. (M: Oh yeah, yeah)

M: Okay now, my last question. You've, you, you've eh, lived in Albion for a long time. Uh why, why have you decided to stay here instead of [both talk; interviewer unclear]

B: Going somewhere else? (M: Yeah)

M: Why, why did you stay here?

B: It's quiet to bring up a family. [unclear]. And uh, oh, when I used to live there, I used to go to bed with my doors unlocked, see. Today you, [unclear], you can't do that. (M: Yeah) And uh it was quiet for, for somebody that used to bring up a family it was quiet. Just like in the city maybe, today [unclear]. I like it. I like it. We used to have buses before. Now we don't have no more buses, only for the elderly place. We, (M: Yeah) well of course everybody's got cars. (M: Yeah) Of course I don't drive with my husband because he never take me here and there when I [unclear]. And then after New York, I'd like to go again but I don't know if I will or not, because my son over there. My granddaughter might come in for the Labor Day. She's not sure. (M: Huh) [unclear]. I miss them. That's the only three grandchildren I have. (M: Oh; they're in New York?) Yes. They've been there for eleven years. He used to live in Woonsocket. He works for Genesee. (M: Genesee, yeah) So that's where he works. He got a twenty-four year old son, he got a twenty-one year old daughter, and the last one is nineteen. She came in this summer when I had my other eye operated on. She came in with her boyfriend. He's [unclear]. I said, "Do you only go to college for social life?" He says, "Yes, ma'am." He said, "I socialize all week, all week." [interviewer chuckles] I've got a picture of him. See they're both there on the table. (M: Oh yeah) [pause: 5 sec.]

M: Okay. Very good. (B: Now, that's it?) Thank you very much, yeah.

[end of tape]